



DESIGN REVIEW GUIDE

Utilities and Other Essentials

Waukegan is well known as a city with a high quality of life, small and cohesive neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown and waterfront – all within a spectacular setting on the shores of Lake Michigan. This deserving reputation is due in part to the City’s small size, entrepreneurial spirit, civic-minded citizens and activist government. One of the many factors that make Waukegan such a great place to live, work and visit is the community’s attention to detail, and respect for its setting, heritage and quality urban design.

Waukegan’s Design Review process strives to protect the city’s unique qualities and strong sense of place by carrying out citywide development and design objectives. The purpose of this *Design Review Guide* is to help applicants in preparing projects to be reviewed by the Development Review Board and the Waukegan Development Commission. Through materials such as this, the Department of Planning & Zoning seeks to make information available well before the final design of a project saving the applicant, and the city, time and money.

DESIGN ISSUES

Did your mother always tell you “it’s the little things that matter most?”

When planning a large, and even a small project, most of our time and energy goes into the big things. Where should the buildings go? What type of use will fit best? What size addition should we build? We try to take things “one step at a time” and typically don’t worry about the details until the very end.

Design review asks us to consider many of those “little things” early in the planning process. It is often those details that make the biggest difference. When pieces are added on at the last minute, they typically look that way. The goal of design review is to help us think through a project, including some of the important details, to ensure all of the pieces of the puzzle fit together into one neat package. This care and thought will show through in the final product - adding lasting value to the property and its surroundings.

TREATMENT OBJECTIVES

You typically wouldn’t put your washer in the living room, or your furnace in the front foyer. The basic objective in planning interiors is to hide utility connections, and to keep function in mind. The same holds true for the outside as well. Strive to make every piece of a project blend into the whole picture and don’t let one element dominate the scene unless you want it to. This is particularly important when working with historic buildings. Think about what aspects of the property you want to show off, as well as those you don’t.

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

Solid Waste

Typically trash cans, recycling containers and dumpsters are unsightly. They must also be accessible and moveable.

When incorporating them into your building and site plan, try to keep them hidden from view and out of the way of cars and people using the site.

Secondly, they need a well-defined space to ensure they don’t migrate around the parking lot and scatter trash around the neighborhood. This area needs to be accessible and convenient to both residents and trash/recycling haulers. Finally, use durable and low-maintenance screening materials that match or coordinate with the main structure.



Dumpster Screening

Utility Meters

Everyone uses water and electricity, and many have gas connections. The meters associated with these utilities need to be regularly accessed in order to be read. This doesn’t mean they have to be the most prominent feature of the front façade. By simply moving them around the corner to a side can make all the difference in the public appearance of your building. In addition, by moving them just a few feet away from the corner, landscaping can be planted to screen them from the street, while still allowing easy access. If you have a



Meters and recycling in alcove

lot of meters – say for an apartment house – make an enclosure of matching materials to the structure. Again, it hides the bank of meters and keeps the weather off them too.

Transformers

One result of placing utilities such as power and telephone underground is the green boxes and domes that need to go on the ground. This is necessary equipment, and must be occasionally accessed by the utility company. Do you really want it right in front of your building – the one you just spent a lot of money to design and build? Simply moving them off to the side, or the back of the parking lot – still within easy truck access for the utility company can help. Using landscaping to hide them from view, can also prevent them from becoming a dominant feature of your front yard. Placing them in underground vaults can be an option in some cases as well.



Landscaping for transformer screening

Mailboxes

Whenever possible, mailboxes should be placed on the building and be undercover – a pleasant benefit for the residents. If that’s not an option, consider the mailbox as a design challenge. Make it into a unique structure of its own by using leftover building materials and a little creativity. Ready access and convenience are important, but don’t let it dominate the front entrance.

Satellite Dishes

Don’t let your big satellite dish in your front yard be your property’s defining feature. The rule of thumb here is “smaller is better.” A little thought and creativity can find places for dishes, either on a building or in a yard, that are hidden from view. Landscaping can also be a big help. Thankfully, the industry is offering ever-smaller and less-obtrusive dishes. Take advantage of the new technology and improve your yard as well as your viewing.

Rooftop Mechanical Equipment

In larger projects, ventilation and air conditioning equipment is often placed on the roof of the building. This is great for the site, but can seriously disrupt roof lines and views from neighboring buildings.



Equipment hidden on roof behind parapet wall

Two easy solutions here are to group mechanicals together using the building’s roofline to hide them from public view, and match the color to the roof. Sometimes a false-façade can be used to both enhance the building’s roofline and shield rooftop equipment. Another option may be to place them in the rear of the property near a service entrance.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

City zoning & general information

Department of Planning and Zoning

100 N. Martin L. King, Jr. Avenue

Waukegan, Illinois 60085

847.625.6878

City building permits

Building Department

100 N. Martin L. King, Jr. Avenue

Waukegan, Illinois 60085

847.625.6868

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